

**SPORTS CULTURE AMONG UNDERGRADUATES: A STUDY OF
STUDENT-ATHLETES AND STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN¹**

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THE CONTEXT

Our project has a well-established intellectual pedigree and forms an essential component of a larger academic concern. Since the late 1980s, Andrei Markovits has worked on what he has called “sports cultures” by which he has meant the large framework wherein people “follow” sports.² As such, his work has concentrated more on the consumption of sports—their “followers” or fans or supporters—as opposed to their production, that is their “doers”, their participants.

To be sure, there has always existed a major overlap between “followers” and “doers”. People follow sports in good part because they also played them at some point in their lives or continue to do so, even on a rudimentary and amateurish level. However, this link has become ever more tenuous, particularly regarding the very few sports that comprise a society’s “sports culture”. Crudely put, one need not have played one second of football in one’s life to have developed into a rabid and highly knowledgeable football fan. Indeed, most American football fans have never played football on any level, let alone the two levels that define football’s presence in America’s sports culture: the National Football League and college. And this characteristic pertains to all other modern sports that comprise a society’s “sports culture”. As a major characteristic of modernity in sports, the followers have gradually – and massively -- come to outnumber the doers. More important still, it is the followers that really define what Markovits has called a society’s “hegemonic sports culture” that comprises its “sports space”.³

² See, among other publications, Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, *Offside: Soccer and American Exceptionalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); and the July 2003 issue of the *American Behavioral Scientist* edited by Andrei S. Markovits, Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young devoted to the topic “Sport and Cultural Space.” See *American Behavioral Scientist (ABS)*, Volume 46, Number 11, July 2003.

³ Ibid.

Markovits's work has analyzed these concepts both in an historical as well as a comparative context. In particular, his research and publications have focused on explaining in what ways America's sports culture is similar to that of the rest of the world but also how—and why—it is noticeably different.

Hegemonic sports cultures, so Markovits has argued, do not only differ by geography and history, but also by factors such as gender, age, class, religion and ethnicity. In some of his more recent publications, Markovits has compared these cultures to languages.⁴ Just like with languages, the earlier one learns and internalizes these cultures, the better one knows and speaks them, the more one appreciates their nuances, the greater an expert one becomes. Just like languages, these sports cultures create communities which include as well as exclude. American sports languages, so Markovits has argued, have remained largely confined to the North American continent and have by and large excluded North Americans from the absolute lingua franca of global sports cultures – the world of soccer. Moreover, these sports cultures – like all other languages – have been massively gendered. Until recently, women were much less advanced and skilled sports speakers than men; and now, that they have acquired the cognitive structures of these sports languages and become skillful in them, it seems that they use them quite differently, in their own voice so to speak.⁵

Upon his arrival at the University of Michigan in the fall of 1999, Markovits designed a course that was to teach students about sports in the context of Markovits's scholarly approach. From its very beginning, the course—appropriately entitled “Sport as Culture in Advanced

⁴ Andrei S. Markovits, “Fussball in den USA als prominenter Ort der Feminisierung: Ein weiterer Aspekt des ‘amerikanischen Sonderwegs’” in Eva Kreisky and Georg Spitaler (eds.) *Arena der Maennlichkeit: Ueber das Verhaeltnis von Fussball und Geschlecht* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2006), pp. 255 – 276.

⁵ See, for example, Gillian Lee Warmflash, “In a Different Language: Female Sports Fans in America” (Senior Honors Thesis, The Committee on Degrees in Social Studies, Harvard University, 2004).

Industrial Democracies: The United States in a Comparative and Historical Context”—has analyzed how sports developed as an integral part of public life in all industrial societies.

It was by meeting with students in this course over the years—inside and outside the classroom—that Markovits began to learn how students at the University of Michigan construct their sports culture, which sports they follow, what teams they love, whom they adore as a star. Markovits became curious as to what—if any—differences existed in the sports cultures and their construction on the part of student athletes and “regular” students. Did male and female Michigan students exhibit marked differences in their respective sports cultures? Did other social characteristics of Michigan students lead to variations in sports cultures? If so, how did they and why? If not, what explained their commonalities?

Markovits’s interest became concretized through lengthy discussions with Eric Ambinder who had enrolled in Sociology 212 as a freshman. Ambinder visited Markovits in his office hours on a regular basis and the two discussed this topic for months before they decided to construct a questionnaire and have it submitted as a survey to Michigan’s student athletes as well as its students. By the end of the summer of 2002, the questionnaire was completed. The study could commence.

Seeking—and receiving—approval from the University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study (IRB number B03-00002782-R2, please consult the survey instrument included in full at the end of this document), Markovits and Ambinder then sought the permission and help of William C. Martin, the University’s Athletic Director. Without his enthusiastic endorsement and the dedicated support of his staff, the researchers would never have been able to reach 24 of Michigan’s 25 varsity teams and have their respective athletes participate in the survey in such large numbers. Our only regret remains that the University’s

vaunted football team did not participate in our study for reasons that were never explained to us. The survey was conducted during the academic year 2002/2003. By the time everything was coded and analysis of the data commenced in earnest, Eric Ambinder had been graduated from the University of Michigan and enrolled as a student in the University of Florida's Law School. In his stead, in stepped Amy Duvall who, in the meantime, had also been graduated from Michigan's undergraduate college and enrolled in its Law School. Lastly, David Smith, a doctoral student in Michigan's Department of Political Science, who had become a teaching assistant in Markovits's large sports course, joined the project. As such, this work represents a product that involved the participation and collaboration of representatives of the University of Michigan's three core constituents: faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.

With the main focus of our study being the real or putative differences in how gender continues to shape the consumption of sports – especially of what we have termed “hegemonic sports culture” – we searched the literature for studies that featured analyses in the perception of sports by male and female fans mainly in the United States, particularly among university-age cohorts. It is to a very brief review of some relevant literature that we now turn.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Jeffrey James and Lynn Ridinger undertook a study among sports fans to examine gender differences in the reasons for enjoying sports.⁶ In their survey of fans at men's and women's college basketball games at a large Midwestern University, the researchers randomly selected fans to complete a questionnaire regarding their consumption of sports and the reasons for doing so. The main finding from this questionnaire was that men and women define “sport fan” very

⁶ Jeffrey D. James and Lynn L. Ridinger, “Female and male sports fans: a comparison of sport consumption motives.” *Journal of Sport Behavior*. Sept 2002. 25(3): 260-278.

differently. Whereas men may consider themselves fans of a sport in general and derive part of their social identity in being a fan of that sport (or sports in general), the study suggests that women may think of themselves as fans of a specific team, rather than general sports fans. However, despite these obvious gender differences in sports consumption, it also appears that men and women consume sports (as observers rather than players) for similar reasons: enjoying the action of games and as an escape from the routine of daily life.

In another study, Dietz-Uhler et al. set out to discover how women consider themselves to be sports fans if they do not participate in traditional sport fan behavior.⁷ The authors obtained their data by distributing a questionnaire among college students who were receiving extra credit for a class. The authors set out with the assumption that male and female students would report being a sports fan in equal numbers while their fan behavior and reasons for being a fan would vary. Their sample size consisted of 76 students 96 percent of whom were white. The study found significant gender differences in the amount of time devoted to the discussing of sports, watching sports on television, sports knowledge, and game attendance. With all these dimensions constituting what has generally been accepted as the core of traditional sport fan behavior, the authors found a much larger percentage of male respondents participating in this aspect of sports compared to females. Furthermore, the authors found that male sport fans tended to play sports more than did their female counterparts and also enjoyed learning about them as an intellectual and cognitive exercise whereas females tended to attend games, cheer, and watch sports with friends and family, though not discuss details of these sports. Overall, the study concluded that being a sport fan was more important for the identity of males as

⁷ Beth Dietz-Uhler, Elizabeth A. Harrick, Christian End, and Lindy Jacquemotte, "Sex differences in sport fan behavior and reasons for being a sport fan." *Journal of Sport Behavior*. Sept 2000. 23(3): 219-231.

individuals and as a collective than it was for females who found sports to be a time and venue for social bonding.

There can be no doubt that Title IX has played an absolutely essential role in the completely changed gender relations that have informed most aspects of college sports in the United States. Studies on this topic are far too numerous and important to be mentioned cursorily in our context. Still, we would like to mention two particularly relevant ones to our own concern that highlight the advances that women have made in this area but also emphasize the setbacks they have experienced and the continued hurdles they will still need to overcome.

A study conducted by Vivian Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter investigates the impact of Title IX for female athletes competing in the NCAA.⁸ The authors examine the changing levels of female participation, coaching, and sports administrators for women's sports between 1977, the year before Title IX was required to be implemented by all schools, and 1998.

Overall, the researchers find that female participation in intercollegiate athletics has steadily increased over the two decade period that constitutes their study. Yet, over that same period of time, the number of female coaches in women's sports has been decreasing as has the number of female administrators for women's athletic programs. The number of women coaching men's teams has remained the same. However, this phenomenon is less pronounced for Division III schools. These data suggest that as women's sports programs become better funded, better known and socially more acceptable to mainstream sports culture which – of course – remains heavily male, men develop a greater interest in and genuine appreciation of these women's programs possibly to the extent of pushing women out of leadership positions

⁸ Vivian R. Acosta and Linda Jean Carpenter, "Women in intercollegiate sport: a longitudinal study – twenty one year update: 1977-1998," (unpublished manuscript, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York). The article is also cited in G.B. Cunningham and M. Sagas, "Occupational Turnover Intent Among Assistant Coaches of Women's Teams: The Role of Organizational Work Experiences," *Sex Roles*, Volume 49, Number ¾, August 2003; 185 – 190.

that was formerly their domain prior to the passage of Title IX.

In a fascinating study pertaining to the different (re)presentation and depiction of male and female sports by colleges that belong to the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), without any doubt the leading body of American college sports, Jo Ann Buysse and Melissa Embser-Herbert studied the portrayals of female college athletes on the front covers of media guides published by NCAA-affiliated colleges.⁹ The researchers commenced with the premise that the way a college or university portrays athletes on the front cover of its media guides embodies a solid measure as to how that institution in particular – but by dint of college sports' prominent position in American culture the American sports establishment as a whole – perceives athletes and their gender. The authors sought to discover as to whether gender stereotypes existed in these publications. Their analysis of 307 covers from 1990 and 314 from 1997 featured a careful study of the setting, dress, and positioning of the athletes as well as the theme (degree of athleticism) of the cover photograph(s).

Overall, males were more frequently portrayed in uniform and in athletic poses than women in both 1990 and 1997. Pictures of female athletes tended to focus less on their athleticism and more on their beauty and other attributes. The authors regarded this situation as a continuing marginalization of female athleticism and the preservation of “sport as a primary area of ideological legitimation for male superiority through gender differentiation and as represented in the cover photographs of these media guides.”¹⁰

In a detailed review of the literature on leisure sciences (including sports), sociology,

⁹ Jo Ann M. Buysse and Melissa Sheridan Embser-Herbert. “Constructions of gender in sport: An analysis of intercollegiate media guide cover photographs.” *Gender & Society*. Feb 2004. 18(1): 66-81.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

marketing, and history from a feminist perspective, Lee McGinnis, Seungwoo Chun and Julia McQuillan demonstrate the unabated gendered depiction of virtually all themes in these areas which – needless to say – have not been favorable to women.¹¹ To be sure, in the world of sports the presence of females as athletes and fans has massively increased in the United States for both live sporting events and those conveyed by the sports media. Advertisers and merchandisers have recognized women as true fans and have begun to market to them accordingly. However, as women begin to “intrude” on traditionally male “turf” by becoming fans of such “male” as football and NASCAR, many men resent and resist this intrusion. The authors argue that in the ensuing defense of their domain, men harness seemingly complex “sports talk” to exclude women. Moreover, the researchers submit that the division of participation in sports by gender serves to maintain male resistance to the incorporation of women into the sports domain.

Among female athletes at the collegiate level, Title IX has not yet attained complete equality. McGinnis, Chun, and McQuillen cite the lower salaries of female coaches in NCAA-affiliated institutions, the smaller presence of female involvement with collegiate sports when measured against the percentage of females in the university population all of which suggest to the authors that the male domination of sports in the media and in society still continues. Lastly, the authors argue that the objectification of women in sports media has led to their continued weakness in the realm of athletics. Objectification includes the posing of female athletes like swimsuit models, the hawking of beauty products in female athletic magazines, and discussion of female athletes in childlike terms (such as the vulnerability of female gymnasts or

¹¹ Lee McGinnis, Seungwoo Chun, and Julia McQuillan, “A review of gendered consumption in sport and leisure.” *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, Number 5, 2003; 1-24.

ice skaters).

The Taylor Research and Consulting Group conducted a study in 2001 tracking the gender differences in sporting habits among children.¹² While older boys (aged 14 to 18) were found to spend the most time on sports, a lot of time revolves around sports for girls aged 9 to 18 as well. Interestingly, young girls and older boys were found to have similar sports habits – enjoying the competition of sports and wanting to be a professional athlete more than older girls or younger boys. The explanation for the similarity in these two groups appears to have a generational or life cycle explanation. The generational aspect factors in the growth in female athletic role models. The life cycle explanation suggests that as girls grow older, they decrease their interest in all aspects of sports, while as boys grow older, their interest in sports increases, perhaps due to social factors as suggested by a study of female ice hockey fans in the United Kingdom that corroborates the gendered “language” of sports well beyond the United States and well beyond the sports that comprise a country’s “hegemonic sports culture”.

Garry Crawford and Victoria Gosling conducted 37 interviews with ice hockey fans in the UK over three years of audience observation at both British and American ice hockey games. Interviewees were attracted and awarded with a signed team jersey and from the respondents, a representative group covering the full range of fans was chosen for interviews.¹³

Female fans were mainly attracted to ice hockey for the safety and accessibility of the games. They tended to be young (in their 20s and 30s) and bring children to the games. The safety of the events, the lack of hooliganism in the arenas, meant that the sport lacked the fear

¹² Rebecca Gardyn, “A league of their own.” *American Demographics*. March 2001. 23(3): 12-13.

¹³ Garry Crawford and Victoria K. Gosling, “The myth of the ‘puck bunny’: female fans and men’s ice hockey.” *Sociology*. 2004. 38(3): 477-493.

and hostility found in other mass-spectator sports, particularly football better known as soccer in the United States. Male fans often viewed female fans as inauthentic, or “puck bunnies”, believing that their primary reason to attend the games was to ogle the players rather than appreciate the sport. In the opinion of one male interviewee, “sport’s a man-thing, they make it girlie.”¹⁴ The authors view the changing composition of sports fans as a process of global bourgeoisification and commercialization; newer sports lack the working-class traditions of the older, more established, sports and thus are more accessible to women and become more middle-class. The authors give soccer in the United States as an example of the phenomenon of newer sports being more accepting of female fans. Indeed, as Markovits has demonstrated in a number of his studies on soccer in the United States and Europe, in both contexts new challengers to the hegemonic sports cultures and established languages are vilified by the insiders (overwhelmingly men) as “feminine”, hence inauthentic and undesirable.¹⁵ Soccer, arguably the most macho sport in Europe and much of the world, continues to be derided in the United States as a woman’s sport. Conversely, ice hockey, baseball, basketball and even American football are stigmatized by “manly” European “footballers” as effeminate. Thus, the gender ascribed to a sport by the relevant male sport establishment has nothing to do with the sport’s purported toughness and everything with its potential challenge to the existing cultural order. The marginalization and delegitimation of a potentially threatening newcomer to the established hegemonic sports culture occurs everywhere via the following well-worn trifecta: it is boring, it is easy, and it is womanly.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 48.

¹⁵ Andrei S. Markovits and Steven L. Hellerman, “Women’s Soccer in the United States: Another American ‘Exceptionalism’” in Fan Hong and J.A. Mangan (eds.), *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation: Kicking Off a New Era* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 14 – 29; and Andrei S. Markovits, “Parallelen und Divergenzen hegemonialer Sportkulturen in Europa und Nordamerika”, Keynote Lecture at the Conference, “Fussball und Globalisierung” at the University of Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany; June 8, 2006.

We now turn to the presentation of our own study and its findings by commencing with a brief description of our sample.

THE SAMPLE

In total, 845 students participated in the survey. This included 398 men and 447 women; 434 athletes and 411 non-athletes. The following table shows how our sample fits into four groups, defined by these two divisions:

	Male	Female
Athlete	209	225
Non-Athlete	189	222

The athlete sample comprised most members of 24 out of 25 of Michigan's varsity teams (the only team absent was football). The table below shows how our athlete sample is distributed across sports:

Sport	Number of respondents ¹⁶
Baseball	30
Men's basketball	16
Women's basketball	10
Men's Cross-country / track	40
Women's cross-country / track	50
Field hockey	23
Men's golf	8
Women's golf	11
Men's gymnastics	12
Women's gymnastics	24
Ice hockey	41
Women's rowing / crew	28
Men's soccer	19
Women's soccer	19

¹⁶ The total is 439; five athlete respondents were not included in the final sample.

Softball	19
Men's swim / dive	18
Women's swim /dive	2
Men's tennis	10
Women's tennis	8
Volleyball	13
Water polo	17
Wrestling	21

The non-athlete sample comes from four sources. Three of these were classes in which the survey was distributed to students—a freshman introductory sociology class, Markovits' "Sport and Society" class (Sociology 212), and a German history class. The fourth source was the Excel Copy Center on South University, Ann Arbor, where copies of the survey were deposited for students waiting in line. At the beginning of each semester, many students visit the copy center to obtain course-packs, and frequently they encounter very long lines. To the usual distractions of reading, listening to music and chatting, we added the opportunity to participate in the survey—an opportunity taken by more than one hundred students. This table shows exactly how many respondents came from each group in our non-athlete sample:

Group	Number of respondents
Sociology 100 – Introduction to Sociology	154
Sociology 212 – Sport and Society	120
History 171 – German History	25
Excel Copy Center	112

This sample, then, comprises only undergraduates, and is weighted heavily towards students in the College of Literature, Science and Arts – the University of Michigan's main undergraduate liberal arts college -- especially the social sciences. All three classes surveyed were undergraduate social science classes, and Excel caters almost exclusively to undergraduates from the College of Literature, Science and Arts. It must also be borne in mind that there exists a large

component of students from the sociology of sport class, whom we would expect to be a “self-selecting” group with greater interest in and knowledge of sport than the general student body. We believe that our sizeable sample represents a valuable and telling segment of Michigan’s undergraduate student population, but in no way do we claim that it constitutes a representative sample of the general undergraduate student population of the University of Michigan.

OUR FINDINGS

We think it is appropriate to classify our findings into two broad categories:

1. The raw facts about sports culture at the University of Michigan—how often students attend sporting events, how often they watch sports on television, who their favorite professional teams and players are, and how they participate in supporting teams in the state of Michigan. This in itself should be intriguing to anyone interested in how students experience and enjoy sports on one of America’s great academic and athletic campuses.
2. The differences between groups of students in the way that they consume and enjoy sports culture. In particular, we are interested in the differences between men and women, between athletes and non-athletes, and between different teams among the athletes. While the pure facts about Michigan’s sports culture may be particular to its time and place—such as the prevalence of Detroit-based teams among student favorites, or the fact that male students watch eight hours of sport a week on television—the differences among groups of Michigan students are differences we may expect to find among undergraduates on other college campuses and even in broader American society. Thus the large gap in knowledge about professional sports that we find between men and women, or the greater tendency of athletes to prefer highlights shows to other televised

sports, are differences that probably persist beyond the confines of our university. While Michigan students might well be different from the rest of the country's population in any number of ways, there is no particular reason to believe that the differences *among groups* of Michigan students should not be reflective of differences in broader society.

Some of the differences we find raise some intriguing questions. Do women just not like professional sports, or do they think about it and enjoy it in different ways from men? Might sports culture in the Markovits sense of it being the most dedicated and committed form of sports consumption be better reflected in the following of professional rather than college sports? Put differently, might the involvement with Michigan teams and college sports among Michigan undergraduates not say more about these students' involvement in campus life and college culture than about their knowledge of and involvement with sports? Does the popularity of highlights shows—as opposed to the telecast of entire games—among athletes affect the way that they play the game? Complete answers to these questions are beyond the scope of this report, but we are reasonably confident that our investigations allowed us to draw interesting and valid conclusions that—we hope—will lay the foundations for future inquiries along the lines suggested by our research into the nature of sports, and their relationship to American society and culture.

Throughout the study, we employ the well-known and helpful statistical tool of *confidence intervals*. A confidence interval, which will probably be familiar to readers from opinion polls, is a “bracket” that envelops a result such as a mean. For example, around our finding that women on average watch 3.2 hours of sport per week, we have a confidence interval of 2.8 to 3.6 hours.

Because we recognize that we may get a different result from a different sample, the confidence interval, set at a “significance level” of 5%, shows us the range in which we would expect to find our answer in 95% of the samples we could take. When we are examining differences among groups, a difference is only *significant* if the confidence intervals for each group do not overlap—in other words, only if we were sure that we would find the same difference in most of the samples we could take.

MEN AND WOMEN

On the night of June 8th, 2005, the University of Michigan became the first college east of the Mississippi ever to win the NCAA World Series of college softball. As Jennie Ritter and the Michigan women dueled with two-time defending champions UCLA in a gripping, extra-innings Game 3 in Oklahoma City, back in Ann Arbor a crowd of about twenty gathered at Scorekeepers bar to follow the contest on ESPN. This was not a bad turnout, given that the game occurred on a weeknight during summer vacation. One of the authors of this study, David Smith, was among those present at Scorekeepers, and something struck him as surprising—of the twenty who had come to the bar that night to watch this event in women’s sporting event, nineteen were men.

This seemed to be solid and *prima facie* confirmation of something that is widely known—that men are more “into sport” than women. But this knowledge needs some closer examination. Although most people would probably report from personal experience that men watch more sport, get more excited by it and know much more about it, few would be able to do so with reference to any hard data to back up their anecdotes. Indeed, there is very little data available that contain such information, and we are pleased now to be able to present some. Even so,

Careful examination of these data shows that the matter is not so clear cut.

Attendance

One of the questions in our survey was how many hours a week students spent attending live sporting events. It may be surprising to see that there is very little difference here between women and men. In fact, the difference is not statistically significant:

Hours of live sport attended			
Gender	Mean	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Male	3.0	2.6—3.4	361
Female	2.7	2.3—3.1	400

It seems reasonable to assume that the sporting events most of the students had in mind when responding to this question were college sporting events, as, living in Ann Arbor, these would be the main events that students would have the opportunity to attend (around 40% of students reported that they had no access to a car). Although there are many disparities between men and women in their consumption of sports, these numbers powerfully illustrate that attending college sports—especially, we suggest, attending football games at the University of Michigan—is a vital ceremony for students regardless of gender. Attending Michigan football games is a ritual of college life on campus that very few University of Michigan undergraduates permit themselves to miss, even if they are not particularly interested in football of any sort. Going to a Michigan game thus says very little about any Michigan student’s involvement with sports culture of any kind and at any level. Our numbers also suggest that *under the right circumstances*, women enjoy watching sports just as much as men, but the circumstances under

which they enjoy it seem to be narrower, on average, than the circumstances under which men enjoy watching sports.

The importance of Michigan’s athletic reputation

The ritual of watching college sports, which involves the formation of deep, lifelong loyalties, is something that has to be experienced to be appreciated. As an illustration of this, to gauge how students felt about college sports before they got to college, we asked them on a scale of 1 to 7 how much “the history of Michigan’s athletic reputation” influenced their decision to come to Michigan. For non-athletes, the average male score is about 4.1 and the average female score 3; this difference is statistically significant:

Importance of Michigan’s athletic reputation to non-athletes			
Gender	Mean (on 1-7 scale)	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Male	4.1	3.8—4.4	189
Female	3.0	2.7—3.2	221

For athletes, among whom we would expect more convergence on this question, the difference is still statistically significant:

Importance of Michigan’s athletic reputation to athletes			
Gender	Mean (on 1-7 scale)	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Male	5.4	5.2—5.6	208
Female	4.7	4.5—4.9	223

The fact that there is a significant gender difference among athletes here is important. We might expect that athletes, regardless of gender, would attach similar levels of importance to the athletic reputation of the college they choose to attend. This cultural difference between men and women, however, is apparently so strong that we observe it even where we would least expect to find it—among athletes.

Involvement at sporting events

Women tend not to get as noisily involved at sporting events, at least not in their own estimation. One survey question asked “On a scale from 1-7, how involved are you at a sporting event (i.e. scream with profanity, argue with refs, participate in cheers, etc.)” 1 was “very quiet” and 7 was “very noisy”. This table gives the complete distribution of answers, and shows that men consider themselves to be noisier at sporting events:

Degree of involvement at live sporting events								
Gender	1 (very quiet)	2	3	4	5	6	7 (very noisy)	Mean
Male	17	41	51	65	99	61	50	4.48
Female	12	54	73	116	112	51	16	4.11

The difference in means is statistically significant here, and we can also observe that fewer women place themselves in the highest registers.

Watching televised sports

Now we turn our attention to the world of sports beyond the campus. The most typical way in which an American experiences sports is by watching them on television. Although various TV networks cover college sports extensively, the greater overall focus is on professional sports, and

even a student who only watched college sports on television would more than likely be watching teams other than those of his or her own college. Students’ consumption of televised sports, then, is a measure of their engagement with the broader culture of American sports, over and above the sports experiences of college life. Our data make it obvious that men are much more engaged in this culture than women. On average, men watch about eight hours of sport on television per week, while women watch just over three. This difference is large and significant:

Hours per week watching sports on television			
Gender	Mean	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Male	8.0	7.2—8.9	384
Female	3.2	2.0—3.6	418

Discussing sports

Another important feature of the broader sports culture is discussion of sports. One question asked students which level of sports they discussed most—college, professional, high school or other. The overall response is that 67% discuss college sport the most while 32% discuss professional sport the most. As about half the members of our sample are college athletes whom we would naturally expect to spend more time discussing college than professional sport, to make general inferences about college students we should look at the non-athlete sample. Here we find that 51.5% discuss college sports the most and 36.5% discuss professional sports the most. Breaking this group down by gender, we find that more non-athlete males discuss college sports than professional sports, (though this lead is not statistically significant), while non-athlete females discuss college sports more than professional sports at a rate of more than two to one.

This, of course, bespeaks again that this is part of their college experience not of their sports

culture. The cultural “space” that female students make for sports in their lives is far more likely, therefore to be directly related to their college experience than that of men, who show equal or more interest in non-college sports. Once again, it may be useful to look at the athlete sample because we would expect less difference from athletes on this question. Overall, athletes are indeed more likely to discuss college sports rather than professional sports the most, at 81% to 27% respectively. Breaking this group down by gender, we find the difference to be more, rather than less, pronounced: over 91% of female athletes discuss college sports the most, while the figure for male athletes is 69%. This lends some evidence to the notion that women “do” sports whereas men “follow” them. Knowing and following a team such as the Detroit Lions shows a commitment to the broader American sports culture that does not necessarily come with following the University of Michigan’s football team. The following table summarizes all of these results, and their relevant confidence intervals:

Level of sports discussed most¹⁷
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¹⁷ As the form of the question was yes or no to each level (college, professional, etc.) in some cases the percentages add up to over 100 because students may have responded “yes” to more than one level as their “most discussed”.

Group	% College (with confidence int.)	% Professional (with confidence int.)	Number of respondents
Overall	67.2 (63.9—70.4)	32.8 (28.6—34.9)	822
Non-athletes	51.6 (46.6—56.6)	36.6 (31.8—41.4)	388
Male non-athletes	45.9 (38.5—53.2)	49.7 (36.6—61.8)	181
Female non-athletes	56.3 (49.5—63.1)	25.2 (19.3—31.2)	206
Athletes	81.1 (77.4—84.8)	27.4 (23.2—31.6)	434
Male athletes	69.9 (63.6—76.1)	43.0 (36.3—49.8)	209
Female athletes	91.5 (87.8—95.2)	12.5 (8.1—16.9)	224

Logo Clothing

A particularly intriguing aspect of sports culture is the wearing of logo clothing. The importance of logo clothing to the Michigan experience would be obvious to anyone who has been in Ann Arbor on a game day, or who has counted the number of shops in downtown Ann Arbor devoted solely to Michigan merchandise (at least five by our count). Michigan may well have marketed its logo clothing more effectively than any other college nationally—and beyond. David Smith, co-author of this study remembers being bewildered, at the age of thirteen, when Michigan baseball caps arrived in stores in his hometown of Sydney, Australia. Although Australians had long been moderate consumers of the logo clothing of American professional teams, American college teams were unknown in Australia before Michigan merchandise first arrived in the early

nineties.

A *USA Today* article (<http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/basketball/men/02tourney/2002-03-27-cover-fab5.htm>) documents the heady increase in revenues that the University enjoyed during this period, based largely on the success of Michigan's highly influential basketball team.

It is unsurprising, then, that nearly all Michigan students surveyed should report owning some collegiate logo clothing (the question did not specify which college, but it seems a fair assumption that most would own Michigan clothing). Men and women own collegiate logo clothing in about the same numbers. It is equally predictable that men own professional logo clothing at a substantially greater rate than women—this is consistent with our other data which suggest that men and women participate equally in the campus sports culture, but very differently in the broader sports culture.

Own logo clothing			
Gender	% own Collegiate clothing	% own professional clothing	Number of respondents
Male	94.5 (92.2—96.8)	83.2 (79.5—87.0)	382
Female	92.5 (90.1—95.0)	58.8 (54.2—63.5)	430

More surprising are the responses on when and where students wear their logo clothing. While equally few men and women wear it as ordinary casual clothing (or never wear it at all), significantly more women than men wear logo clothing when watching televised games, and more women than men in our sample also wear logo clothing at live games (this difference is

almost, but not quite, statistically significant):

Gender	Wear logo clothing			
	Never	As ordinary casual wear	To watch televised events	To live events
Male	4.3% (2.3—6.3)	15.1 (11.5—18.6)	28.6 (24.2—33.1)	30.4 (25.9—34.9)
Female	4.7% (2.7—6.7)	10.1 (7.7—13.4)	39.1 (34.5—43.6)	38.2 (33.7—42.7)

What does this mean? Why are women more conspicuous wearers of logo clothing than men, though in nearly every other facet of sports culture they are less involved than men? We cannot make any general conclusions from our sample, but we may hypothesize that logo clothing, for women, with its distinctive team labels and colors, is a way of *visually* identifying themselves as fans. This is all the more important because women participate less than men in other areas of sports culture—especially, as we shall see, in accumulating trivia—and so may be considered “outsiders” within this culture.

Studies have shown that clothing is a crucial marker for out-groups to get accepted by in-groups. Clothing constitutes a very important outward marker of identifying with a group, an event—a culture—and it clearly signifies a sense of belonging. We also know that most out-groups tend to overcompensate when they try to gain access to in-groups precisely because their access is not taken for granted and is always frowned upon and viewed suspiciously by the insiders. Thus, to be accepted as equals by the already present group which, of course, completely defines all the terms of the discourse—to be genuinely regarded as “inside baseball” (to use an appropriate vernacular of American English, in which sports metaphors are more commonly used than in any

other major language)—outsiders overcompensate on the terms demanded by insiders. Men's fluency in the language of sports culture needs no outward affirmation. It is assumed by all. For women, however, this is not the case. Women still have to prove to men—and to themselves—that they, too, have acquired fluency in the language of sports culture. One signifier of that language is wearing sports paraphernalia. As is well known from Barry Levinson's film "Diner", in which the main protagonist will only marry his bride if she passes a detailed trivia test about the then still Baltimore Colts, men need constant proof from women that women are really serious about sports; that they pass the audition; that they have mastered the language so to speak. So women who care about learning the language of sports culture which is totally masculine and male dominated, overcompensate by wearing sports paraphernalia or other items that signify their arrival in this milieu. To make matters even harder for women, once they have in fact mastered this language, men diminish their achievement by labeling it "studied"—which is precisely what it is. But "studied" is not the real thing for any insiders, it is always used to delineate them from newcomers be it in sports or any other realm of social interaction.¹⁸

Knowledge

A final dimension of sports space is knowledge. Students were asked whether they could name members of the lineups of eight historical and contemporary teams from the four major professional sports: The 1950s and current New York Yankees, the 1960s and current Boston Celtics, the 1970s and current Pittsburgh Steelers, and the 1950s and current Detroit Red Wings. Adding all the answers together, we see that knowledge levels contain the single greatest

¹⁸ For fruitful discussions on all these matters and for many keen insights, we are very grateful to Kate Gallagher. And -- yes, dear Kate -- you are indeed a true and tried San Diego Padres fan even though your boyfriend doubted you because you only knew four of the team's players' names. You have fully passed your audition for our gig.

difference between male and female students in their participation in sports culture: men, on average, could name a total of over ten players while women on average could name about two. Breaking down the questions into contemporary and historic lineups, we find that men could name three historic players on average, while the female average was .3, and that the male average for contemporary lineups was about 7.2, and for women was 1.7.

Number of players known			
Team	Male mean	Female mean	Total mean
1950s Yankees	1.11 (0.99—1.23)	0.17 (0.12—0.22)	0.61 (0.54—0.68)
1960s Celtics	0.52 (0.43—0.61)	0.00 (0.00—0.01)	0.25 (0.20—0.29)
1970s Steelers	0.89 (0.77—1.01)	0.04 (0.02—0.07)	0.44 (0.38—0.51)
1950s Red Wings	0.76 (0.64—0.87)	0.14 (0.09—0.18)	0.43 (0.37—0.49)
Total historic	3.28 (2.94—3.61)	0.35 (0.27—0.44)	1.73 (1.54—1.92)
Contemporary Yankees	2.14 (1.96—2.31)	0.56 (0.46—0.65)	1.30 (1.19—1.40)
Contemporary Celtics	1.25 (1.12—1.39)	0.11 (0.07—0.15)	0.65 (0.57—0.73)
Contemporary Steelers	1.66 (1.49—1.82)	0.15 (0.10—0.21)	0.86 (0.76—0.96)
Contemporary Red Wings	2.17 (1.99—2.34)	0.88 (0.75—1.00)	1.48 (1.37—1.60)
Total Contemporary	7.17 (6.64—7.70)	1.69 (1.47—1.92)	4.27 (3.93—4.60)
Total	10.93	2.04	5.99

	(9.64—11.22)	(1.76—2.32)	(5.59—6.48)
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The lineup that both male and female students knew best was unsurprisingly (given the location) the contemporary Detroit Red Wings, of whom men could name 2.2 on average, and women .9. The least-known lineup was the Boston Celtics of the 1960s, for which the average male and female scores were just .517 and .004 respectively.

Readers who may have been immersed in sports culture their entire lives, who would have no problem reeling off at least five members of each of the four historic teams, and who would consider it a personal failing not to be able to name every starter in the contemporary teams, may be surprised at the apparently low mean scores here. People who are intensely engaged in the broader sports culture are sometimes unaware that much of the population lead satisfied lives without ever knowing the name of a professional athlete. 261 out of our 845 respondents—including 129 athletes—did not give an answer to any of the questions. Fortunately, we have an immediate comparison available. In 2003, Markovits distributed the same survey to 329 student athletes at Harvard University. The results are presented in the following table:

Number of players known (Harvard sample)			
Team	Male mean	Female mean	Total mean
1950s Yankees	1.28 (1.09—1.48)	0.23 (0.13—0.34)	0.80 (0.68—0.94)
1960s Celtics	0.82 (0.65—1.00)	0.06 (0.00—0.12)	0.48 (0.37—0.58)

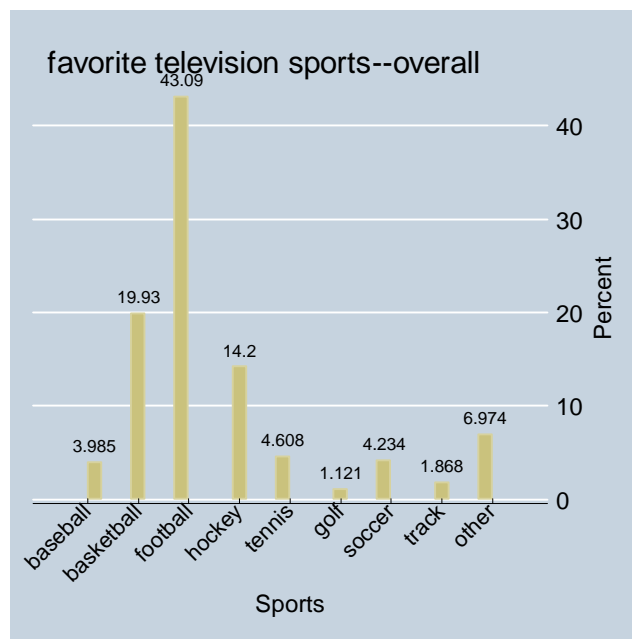
1970s Steelers	1.05 (0.82—1.3)	0.04 (0.00—0.09)	0.59 (0.45—0.73)
1950s Red Wings	0.35 (0.25—0.45)	0.04 (0.00—0.09)	0.21 (0.15—0.27)
Total historic	3.50 (2.97—4.05)	0.38 (0.22—0.54)	2.09 (1.74—2.43)
Contemporary Yankees	2.66 (2.37—2.95)	0.75 (0.58—0.92)	1.83 (1.63—2.03)
Contemporary Celtics	1.91 (1.67—2.14)	0.57 (0.41—0.73)	1.31 (1.15—1.47)
Contemporary Steelers	1.70 (1.44—1.96)	0.08 (0.03—0.13)	0.97 (0.81—1.14)
Contemporary Red Wings	1.63 (1.35—1.90)	0.20 (0.08—0.31)	0.99 (0.81—1.17)
Total Contemporary	7.90 (7.02—8.79)	1.61 (1.28—1.94)	5.11 (4.50—5.71)
Total	11.41 (10.08—12.74)	1.99 (1.55—2.42)	7.19 (6.30—8.10)

There is no statistically significant difference in the total scores between Michigan and Harvard students. A major similarity worth noting between institutions is the gender discrepancy, which is similar at both. Another important factor to take into account, which will be revisited later, is the importance of geography. The Harvard students know significantly more about the Boston Celtics and the New York Yankees, while the Michigan students know significantly more about the Red Wings. There was no significant difference in knowledge of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Over half of the students in the Michigan sample are from Michigan, and a similar number of the Harvard sample are from the Northeast; we can quite sensibly assume that students are more likely to know about the professional teams of their home regions.

Favorite sports

We will conclude this section on gender differences by examining differences in the kinds of sports that men and women like. Students were asked their favorite sport to watch on television, their favorite to attend live, and their favorite to play.

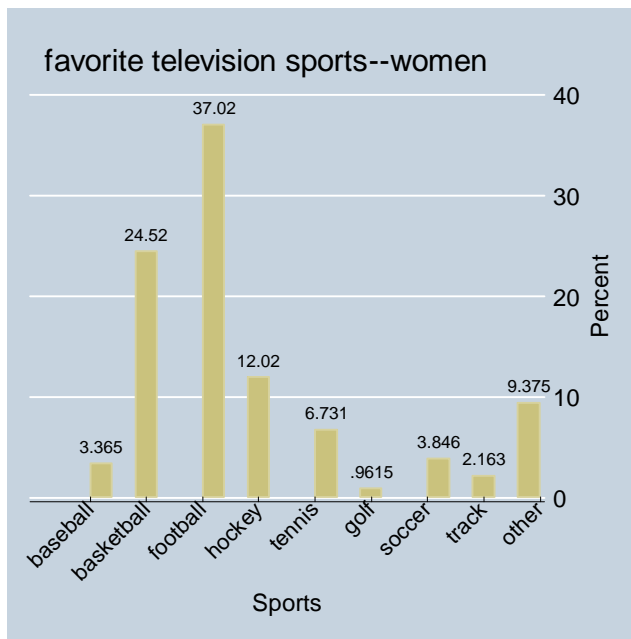
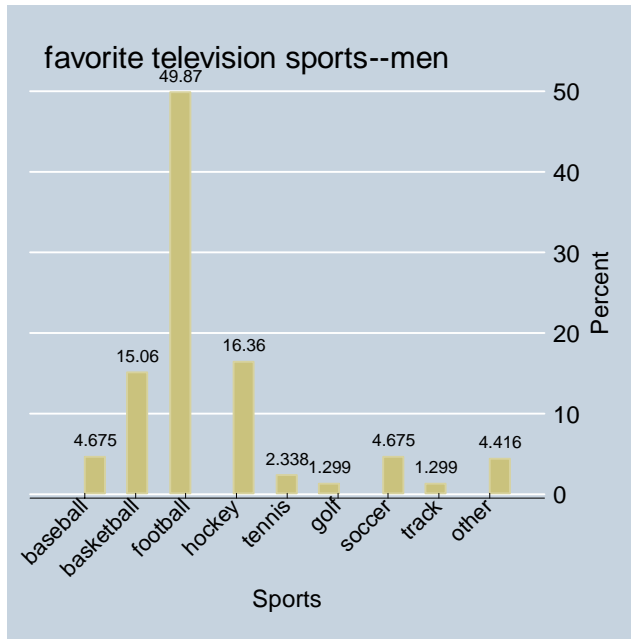
This graph shows the preferences of the whole sample:



For both men and women, the overwhelming television favorite is football, though in greater numbers for men than for women (44% to 32%). Football's supremacy is all the more confirmed by the fact that the biggest athlete group at Michigan, the football players, did not even participate in the survey. More women than men list their favorite TV sport as basketball (23% to 14%), while men favor hockey in greater numbers than women (15% to 11% - bear in mind that we are in Michigan!) Baseball, which is not an ideal "television sport", gains 4.2% and 3.3%

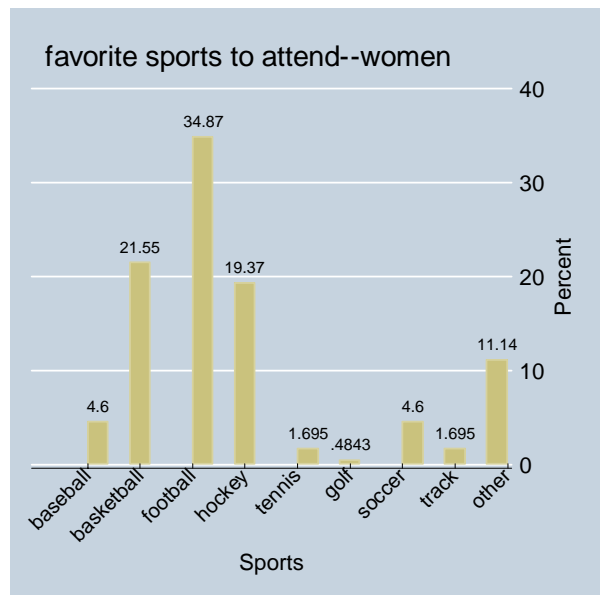
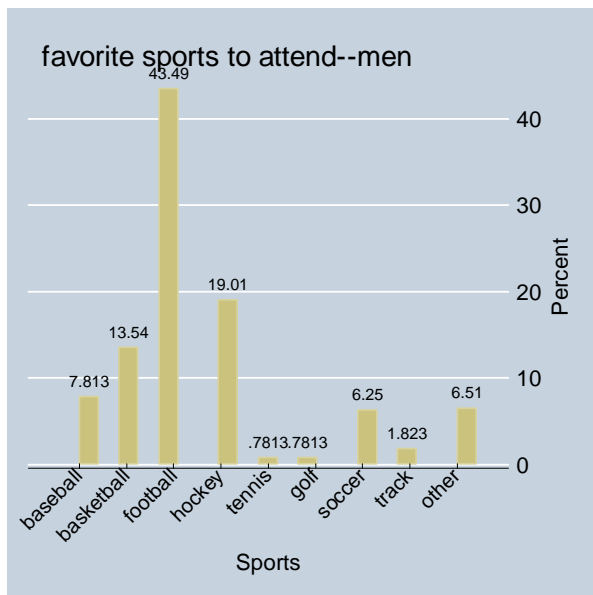
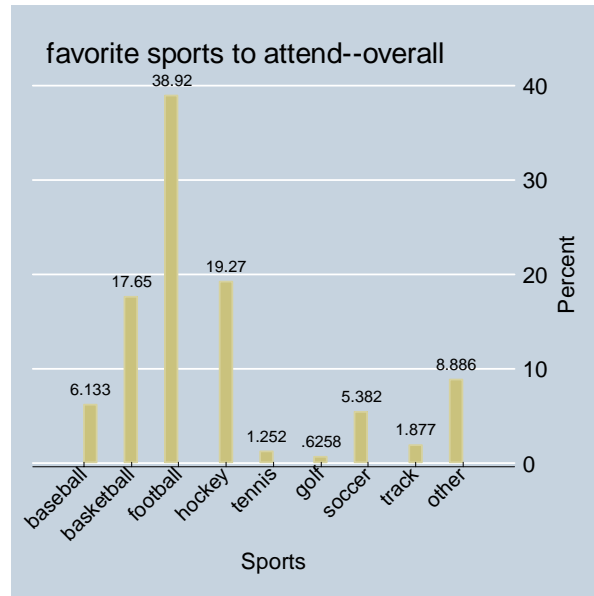
for men and women respectively. Among women, tennis is a more popular television sport than this (6.2%), though baseball is more popular than tennis for men.

For both sexes, baseball trails soccer as a television sport, which finds 4.5% favor with men and 3.5% with women. Our finding about baseball is fascinating since baseball still continues to enjoy the sobriquet of being America's "pastime" and remains – with football and basketball – the third member of the Big Three of America's sports space. Our finding might also corroborate data that demonstrate soccer's immense rise as a major activity among America's youth coinciding with a stagnation, even decline (particularly among African Americans), in the playing and also the following of baseball. America's second-biggest TV sport, NASCAR, gains just one (male) vote as a favorite television sport among Michigan students, putting it behind gymnastics, which gets 3.1% of the female vote and 1.2% of the male vote, and running, which records the same numbers. This would suggest that despite NASCAR's massive nation-wide expansion over at least the last two decades, it remains at core a phenomenon with strong regional links to the South-East, and is geographically limited in the same way that the genuine hockey culture tends to be confined to the North.



These patterns are roughly similar to those that emerge when students are asked their favorite sport to attend live. Football is still number one, and in about the same numbers for either gender (41% for men and 31% for women). Hockey remains prominent with both sexes as a live sport,

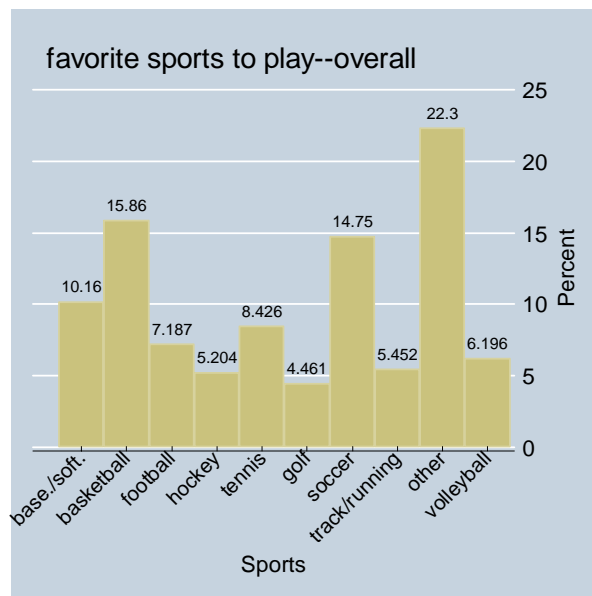
with women listing it as their favorite sport almost in equal numbers to men (17.5% to 18.2%). Baseball also features good numbers as a live sport (8.2% for men and 4.2% for women) which places it slightly ahead of soccer for men and on a par with it for women (6% and 4.2%). There remains a large gap between women and men in favoring basketball as a live sport (20% to 11%).



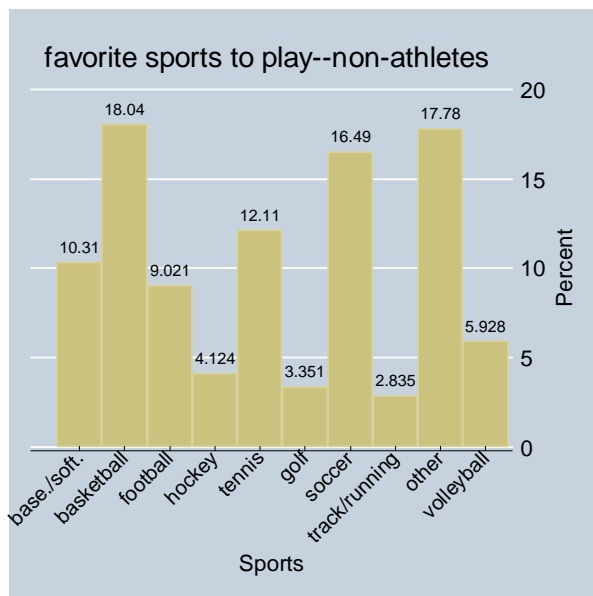
Overall, about 61% of respondents list the same sport as their favorite both to watch on television and to attend live. It seems that men have a greater propensity to favor the same sport in both categories:

Favorite TV sport / favorite live sport		
Gender	Same sport	Different sport
Men	64.3% (249)	34.5% (131)
Women	56% (224)	44% (176)
Total	60.7% (475)	39.3% (307)

A different picture emerges when we ask students which are their favorite sports to play. This graph shows the preferences of the whole sample:

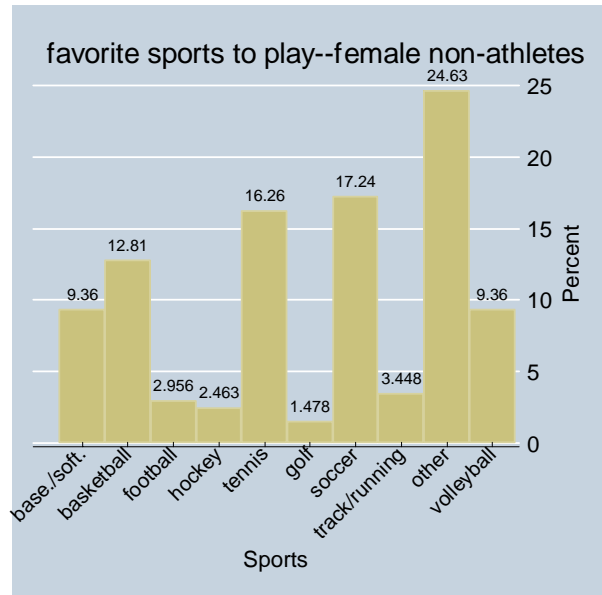
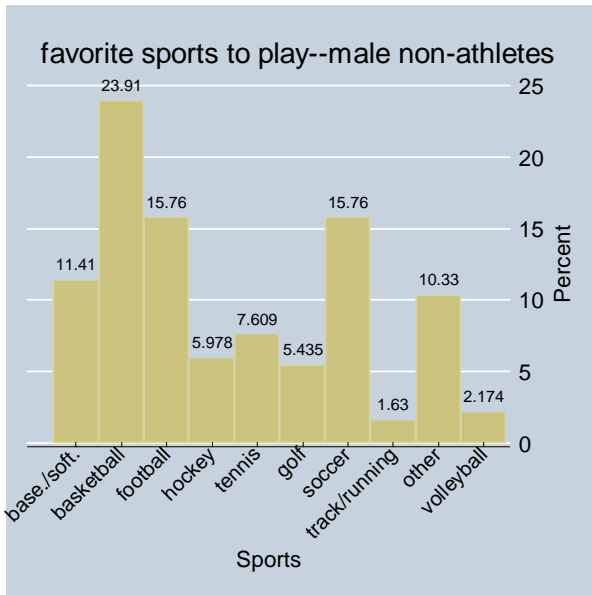


The high score of the “other” category largely reflects the presence of many athletes who do not play the big spectator sports, precisely those that comprise sports culture in society as a whole. When we remove the athlete component, we get a better idea of which recreational sports are more generally popular among students:



The supremacy of basketball, soccer and tennis are obvious here. Other interesting things to note, however, are the continued high position of football, which is relatively difficult to play as a pick-up game, and the low position of running, which, judging by Ann Arbor’s gyms and side walks, may well be the most common form of athletic activity among Michigan students.

Disaggregating this sample by gender, we get the following results:



We have seen that about 40% of students named the same sport as their favorite to watch on TV and to watch live; relatively few nominate the same sport as their favorite to play and their favorite to watch, either live or on TV. In both cases, men are much more likely to name the same sport:

Favorite sport to play / favorite TV sport		
Gender	Same sport Percentage (number)	Different sport Percentage (number)
Men	29.4 (109)	71.2 (270)
Women	21.1 (84)	78.9 (314)
Total	75.1 (585)	24.9 (194)

Favorite sport to play / favorite live sport		
Gender	Same sport Percentage (number)	Different sport Percentage (number)
Men	31.7 (120)	68.3 (259)
Women	22.9 (73)	319 (81.4)
Total	25.1 (194)	74.9 (579)

A total of 134 students (84 men and 50 women) name the same sport in all three categories.

ATHLETES AND NON-ATHLETES

Are there significant differences at Michigan between athletes and non-athletes in their approach to sports culture? Before answering this question, it may be useful to see what other cultural differences exist between the two groups in our sample. In one question, students were asked to place themselves on a seven-point political viewpoint scale with 1 representing “very liberal” and 7 “very conservative”.¹⁹ The mean for non-athletes is 3.42, and for athletes, 3.91. The difference is statistically significant:

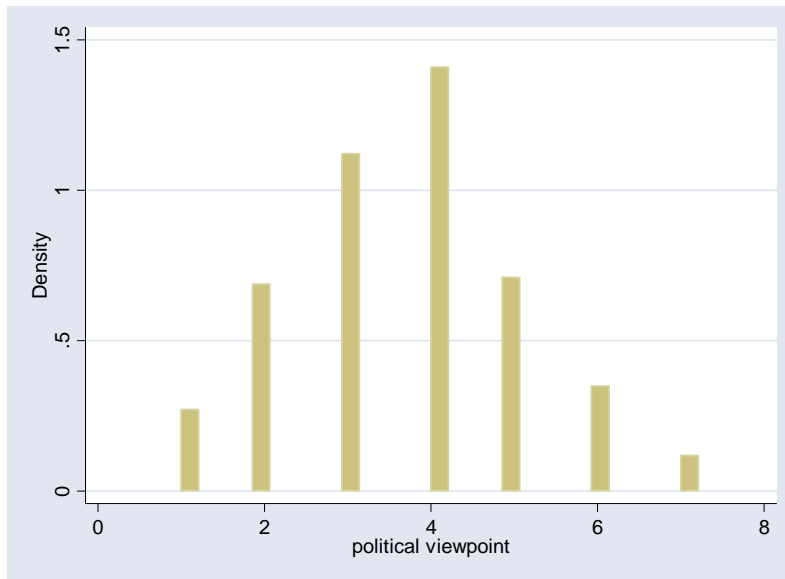
Liberal / Conservative 1-7 scale			
Group	Mean	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Athletes	3.91	3.78—4.04	419
Non-athletes	3.42	3.29—3.55	409

The histograms below show that the main difference between the two groups is that more non-

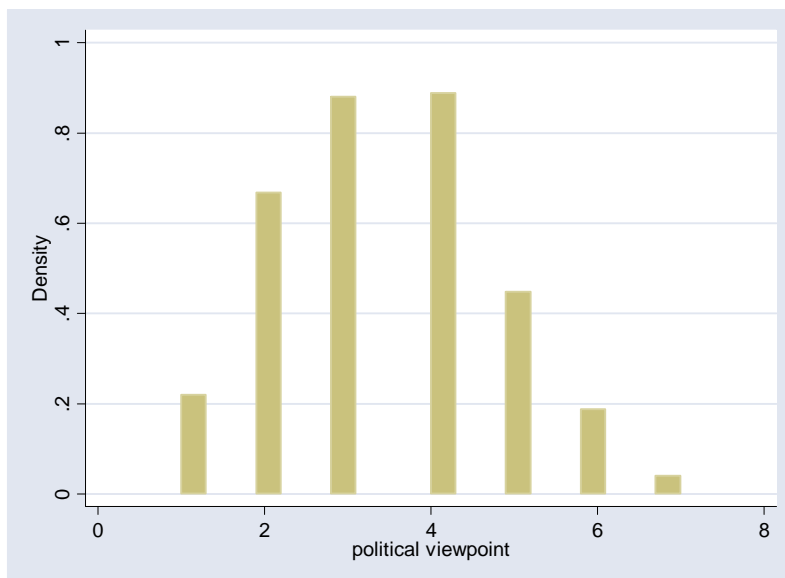
¹⁹ This scale as a way of measuring political position has been used for many years by the National Electoral Study (NES)

athletes place themselves in the moderate liberal category of 3, while more athletes identify themselves in the middle-of-the-road 4 position. The 2002 National Electoral Study yields a national mean on the seven-point scale of 4.35 (this is after the removal of about a seventh of the sample who took an option not available to the students of “don’t know”) which puts both non-athletes and athletes to the left of the nation at large.

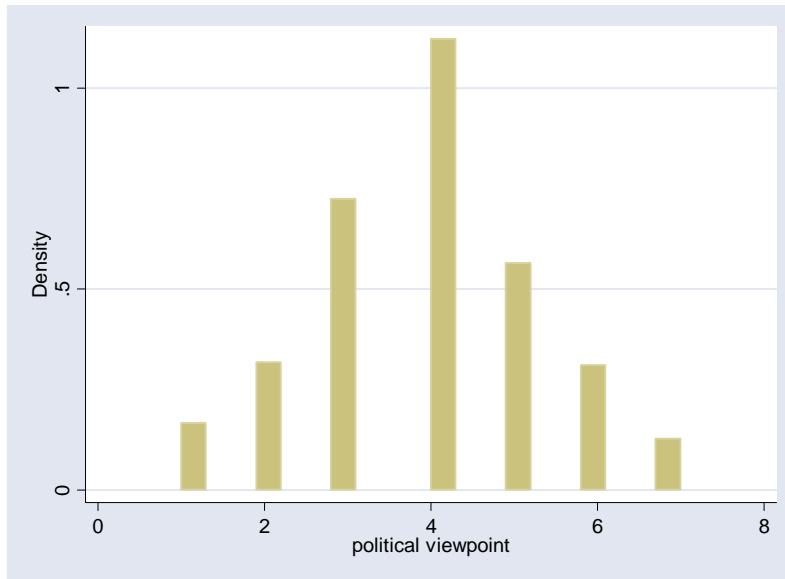
a. Whole sample



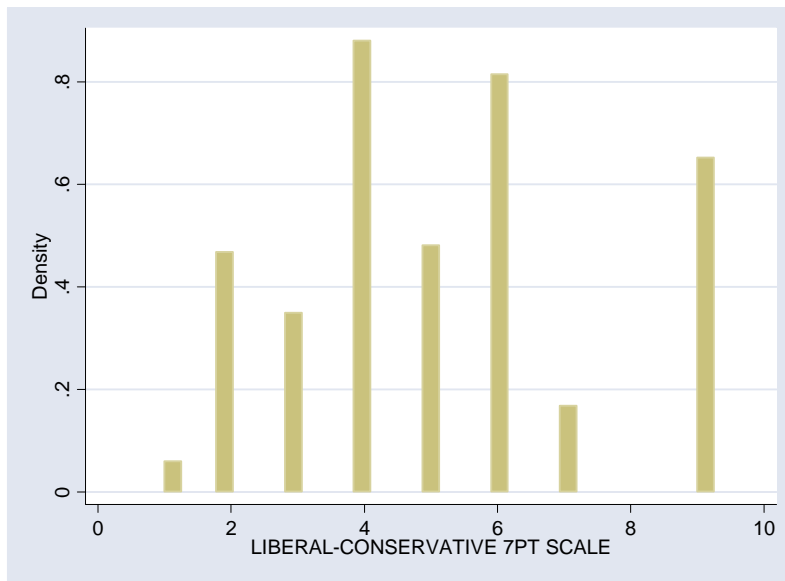
b. Non-athletes



c. Athletes



d. NES sample



In another seven-point scale question, students were asked about their attitudes towards homosexuality, with 1 denoting “very approving” and 7 “very disapproving”. The difference between the groups was similar to the general political difference; the non-athlete mean is 3.14 and the athlete mean is 3.93.

Students were also asked “what is your religion”? The major differences here between the groups were that there are more Catholics among the athletes (38.9% to 26.9%) as well as more Protestants (37.4% to 24.7%). There are many more Jews among the non-athletes (22.9% to 5.2%) and marginally more non-athletes professing no religion or Atheism (14.9% to 13.3%).

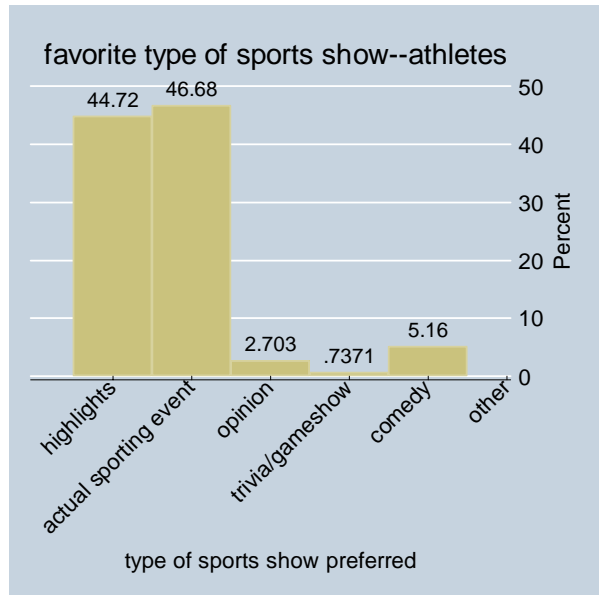
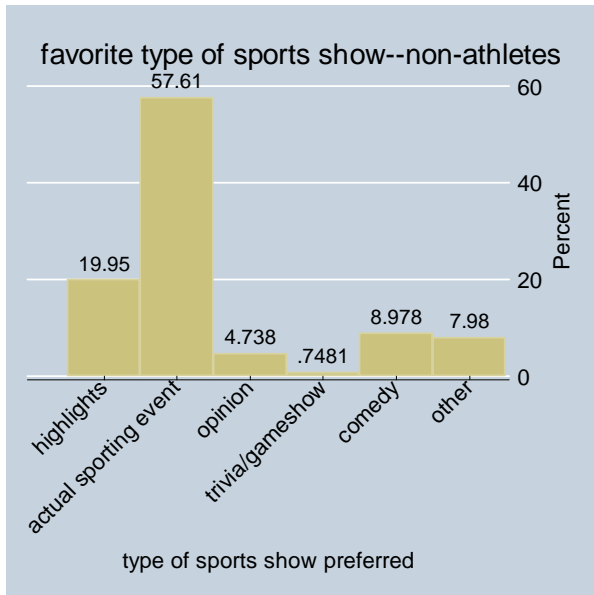
Television consumption

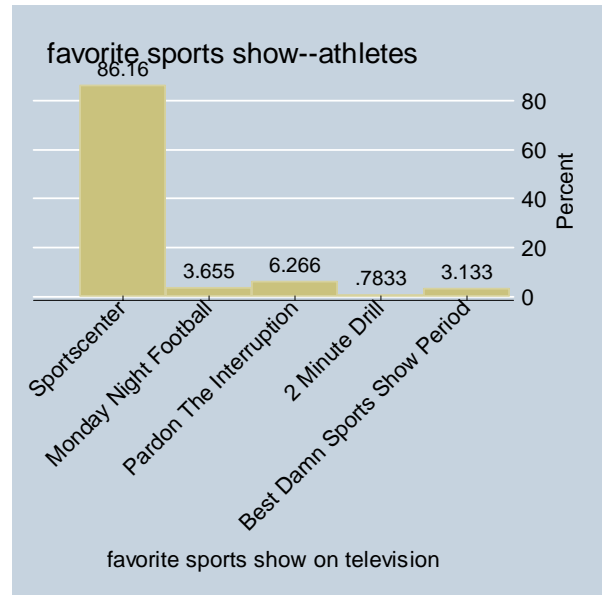
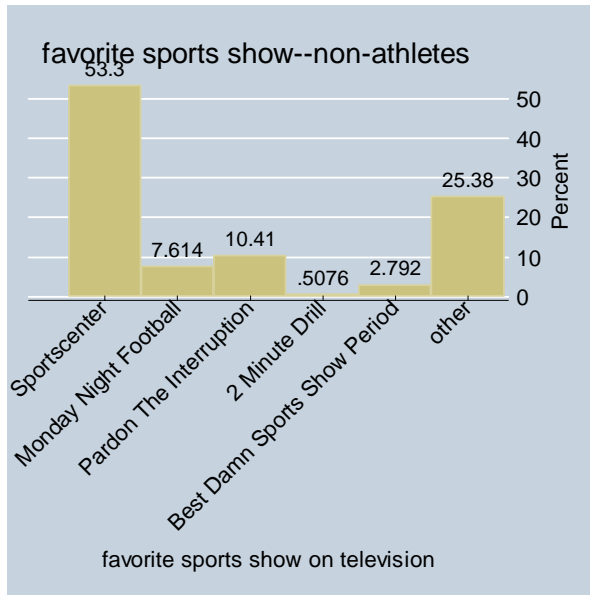
A good starting point for examining the sports culture differences between athletes and non-athletes is their television consumption of sports and sports shows. In our sample, non-athletes watch slightly more sports on television than athletes (5.9 hours to 5.1 hours) but this difference is not statistically significant. If we exclude from the non-athlete sample the students in the sociology of sport class (whom we may expect to watch more sports than average) the athletes watch roughly an hour more than the non-athletes, but once again this difference is not significant.

Hours of sports television watched per week			
Group	Mean	95% Confidence interval	Number of respondents
Athletes	5.1	4.6—5.7	410
Non-athletes	5.9	5.1—6.7	394
Non-athletes (without sociology of sport students)	4.2	3.4—5.0	278

Students were asked two questions about the specifics of their TV sports consumption: their favorite (not necessarily most watched) sports show and their most preferred genre of sports

show (actual events, highlights, opinion, trivia or comedy shows). Here there are substantial differences in taste. The most interesting is the large difference in preferences for highlights shows. 41.9% of athletes list highlights as their favorite genre of sports TV, and a full 86% of athletes listed their favorite sports show as ESPN SportsCenter, the highlights show *par excellence*. Only 19% of non-athletes list highlights as their favorite genre (16% once the sociology of sport component was removed). Both groups have actual events as the overall favorite, but non-athletes in much larger numbers (56% to 44%, 53% to 44% once the sociology of sport component is removed). Far fewer non-athletes list SportsCenter as their favorite show (51%), though this may be because many took a “none of the above” option which was unavailable to athletes (about 25%). When these answers were removed, preference for SportsCenter is 67% among non-athletes.





Occasionally, one hears the argument that ESPN has changed the way sports are played. The prevalence of the highlights reel, it is argued, with its attention on the splashy and spectacular such as home runs and slam dunks, has induced athletes to pursue ever-flashier “highlight reel” material at the expense of fundamentals such as jump shots and sacrifice bunts. Our results cannot tell us whether this argument is correct, but it does show us that highlights shows are preferred by athletes at a much higher rate than among the general student population. One only need watch ESPN itself to find anecdotal evidence of this. In the summer of 2005, for example, commercials for EA Sports *NCAA 2006 Football* featured a monologue by an aspiring college football star that ended with the remark “Hello highlights reel. Hello Heisman”.²⁰ In a televised pool game of the 2005 Little League World Series, ESPN microphones captured a pep talk given by the coach of the Owensboro, Kentucky team, who fired up his eleven year-old players with the comment “that’s how you get on the ESPN highlights.”²¹

²⁰ We are indebted to Jennifer Miller, of the University of Michigan’s Department of Political Science, for realizing the significance of these lines.

²¹ Owensboro, Kentucky v. Lafayette, Louisiana, 8/21/05, Little League World Series, Williamsport PA. This footage did indeed make it to SportsCenter later that evening.

Favorite teams and players

Several questions probed different areas of students' enjoyment of sports. Students were asked their current favorite player, current favorite team, and favorite player through childhood. Answers were coded according to the sport named. Overall, 62.1% of respondents listed their favorite teams and players in the same sport, 53.5% indicate their favorite team and favorite player through childhood in the same sport, and 46.6% mark their favorite team and favorite player through childhood in the same sport. There is little difference between athletes and non-athletes concerning these questions. Interestingly, despite the fact that there were no football players in the sample, football teams are the most frequently named by athletes as their favorites, with 26.4%.

Students' specific responses about their favorite players and athletes inevitably reflect their time and place. The responses to favorite teams among students at an institution of higher learning in the state of Michigan and in the Detroit vicinity to boot clearly featured Detroit-based teams, with the Red Wings as decisive favorites, reflecting hockey's privileged status in the state of Michigan. It must be remembered, though, that this survey was conducted before the Pistons' 2004 championship, and it might be expected that the Pistons would make gains on the dormant Red Wings in a survey conducted in 2005. The leading non-Detroit teams are the Chicago Cubs, which reflects that team's generally widespread national appeal as well as a Midwestern regional bias; and the LA Lakers, who gathered an impressive national fan base during the period of the O'Neal / Bryant / Jackson three-peat championship dominance of 2000-2002. Please note that students were not allowed to respond with University of Michigan teams as their favorites,

though they were free to choose other university teams:

Favorite team		
Rank	Team	% of respondents to this question
1	Detroit Red Wings	21.32
2	Detroit Pistons	7.72
3	Chicago Cubs	4.60
3	LA Lakers	4.60
5	Detroit Lions	3.68
6	New York Yankees	3.13
7	Detroit Tigers	2.39
8	New York Giants	2.21
9	Pittsburgh Steelers	1.84
10	Green Bay Packers	1.65
10	Boston Red Sox	1.65
12	Miami Dolphins	1.47
12	Michigan State University	1.47
13	San Francisco 49ers	1.29
14	Atlanta Braves	1.10
14	Cleveland Browns	1.10
14	Denver Broncos	1.10
14	Duke Basketball	1.10
14	New York Knicks	1.10
14	Sacramento Kings	1.10

The list of favorite contemporary players is largely also a mix of Michigan parochialism and temporal success, but there are some interesting exceptions. Michael Jordan, by the time of the survey's being administered in the final year of his career with the Washington Wizards, retained the loyalty of a remarkable number of students, and despite no longer being the dominant force he once had been, and was still the favorite contemporary player of more respondents than were Kobe Bryant, Allen Iverson or Shaquille O'Neal. After the Red Wings' icon Steve Yzerman, the next four favorite athletes all play basketball—which makes Jordan's continuing position of dominance all the more impressive. Probably the most glamorous player in all of international sports, David Beckham (then of Manchester United, now of Real Madrid) is ranked eighth,

above Derek Jeter or Barry Bonds. It is open to question how much of Beckham’s popularity is due to his towering soccer presence (he is regarded by some as the best English player in a generation) and how much is due to his high visibility in other channels of celebrity publicity. The highest-ranking women are Mia Hamm and Annika Sorenstam, both at 15. The highest-ranking Michigan alumni are Tom Brady (6), Chris Webber (10) and Charles Woodson (15).

Favorite current player		
Rank	Player	% of respondents who answered this question
1	Steve Yzerman	9.56
2	Michael Jordan	4.22
3	Kobe Bryant	3.56
3	Allen Iverson	3.56
5	Ben Wallace	3.33
6	Tom Brady	2.22
7	Brett Favre	2.00
8	David Beckham	1.78
8	Joey Harrington	1.78
10	Chris Webber	1.56
10	Derek Jeter	1.56
10	Pete Sampras	1.56
13	Andre Agassi	1.33
13	Tracy McGrady	1.33
15	Barry Bonds	1.11
15	Nomar Garciaparra	1.11
15	Mia Hamm	1.11
15	Mario Lemieux	1.11
15	Joe Sakic	1.11
15	Annika Sorenstam	1.11
15	Charles Woodson	1.11

The list of favorite players from childhood sees Jordan clearly entrenched at the top. Jordan’s epochal dominance of the NBA made him the childhood favorite of nearly a quarter of all who could name a childhood favorite, including 23% of all athletes. Detroit sporting identities feature prominently in this list, with Barry Sanders (2), Steve Yzerman (3), Isaiah Thomas (4), Cecil Fielder (6), Grant Hill (8) and Allen Trammell (10) all making the list. The presence of Steffi

Graf at number 7 is largely due to her status as the unanimous favorite of the women’s tennis team—no other player, not even Jordan for men’s basketball or Yzerman for men’s hockey, was the childhood favorite of an entire varsity program in this way. Interestingly, more respondents were able to name a childhood favorite than a contemporary favorite (62% to 53%).

Favorite Childhood Player		
Rank	Player	% of respondents to this question
1	Michael Jordan	24.52
2	Barry Sanders	4.98
3	Steve Yzerman	4.41
4	Isaiah Thomas	2.68
5	Wayne Gretzky	2.11
6	Cecil Fielder	1.92
7	Steffi Graf	1.53
8	Chris Webber	1.34
8	Grant Hill	1.34
10	Roger Clemens	1.15
10	Dan Marino	1.15
10	Alan Trammell	1.15

All of these responses allow us to make some interesting observations about how identity with a favorite team is formed. From our survey, we can identify three potential factors that may influence team favoritism. Two of these are the favorite player categories featured in the previous two tables. The other is geography.

The method by which we try to determine the relative significance of these factors requires some explanation, and it is important not to overstate the claims we are actually able to make. As most of the favorite players selected were in team sports, we were able to code each of these players as a “team” and then see if they matched the team given as the respondent’s favorite. As players

move from team to team, this naturally required some care—the player’s record had to be carefully inspected to see whether he/she had played for the respondent’s team during the period of their childhood, or during 2002/03 when the survey was administered. This brings a host of problems: players may have switched teams in 2001, or played only for a very short period during the respondent’s childhood, making it difficult to determine if “agreement” really exists between favorite team and athlete. This problem was mitigated, however, by the fact that most of the players named (especially as childhood favorites) were big-name athletes and were obvious long-term “fixtures” in a certain place. Just because a favorite athlete plays for a favorite team, we cannot claim to say that the respondent supports that team because of that player, or favors that player because of that team. However, we can show a probable connection between the two. By comparing the rates of “agreement” between teams and childhood favorites, and teams and current favorites, we can begin to build a case about which is the stronger connection, and stronger influence on sporting loyalties.

The other factor, geography, was more difficult to assess precisely because students named only a region in which their hometown was located (Southeast, Northeast, Midwest, Northwest, Southwest), and so the only “agreement” we could ascertain is whether the respondent’s favorite team is in the same geographic region. We were able to give this more precision for much of the sample by creating a new region for all Michigan residents who listed the Midwest as their home region, and so almost certainly were native Michiganders. This group is about 44% of the total sample. Where hometown region and team region agree, we may venture a good guess that there is a connection between the two. There are many possible causal mechanisms linking team region to hometown region. A Cubs fan may be a Cubs fan out of a deep local identification with

the north side of Chicago; or she may have gravitated to them as a nearby Major League powerhouse to her hometown of Mishawaka, Indiana; or he may even have started supporting the Cubs as a daring but all the more decisive act of rebellion against the prevailing culture in his hometown of St Louis. We do not have any data to suggest which of these causal mechanisms is at work, but we can suggest that there is a connection.

So, which of these three connections is the strongest? There is a clear, statistically significant ordering of the three connections: the strongest is between team and region, the next strongest is between favorite current player and region, and the weakest is between team and favorite childhood player:

Team and region/player connections			
Agreement	Percentage agreed	95% confidence interval	Number of respondents
Team and region	66.8	62.7—70.9	518
Team and favorite current player	46.0	41.0—50.1	387
Team and favorite childhood player	29.0	24.7—33.3	424

All three connections are weaker for athletes than for non-athletes:

Team and region/player connections—athletes			
Agreement	Percentage agreed	95% confidence interval	Number of respondents
Team and region	59.5	53.3—65.6	271
Team and favorite current player	38.3	31.4—45.3	193
Team and favorite childhood player	25.6	19.6—31.7	193

Team and region/player connections—non-athletes			
Agreement	Percentage agreed	95% confidence interval	Number of respondents
Team and region	73.4	68.1—78.7	271
Team and favorite current player	53.6	46.5—60.7	194
Team and favorite childhood player	32.1	25.9—38.3	221

The difference is not statistically significant in the “team and favorite childhood player category”. What do the apparently weaker bonds in the other two categories tell us? It seems reasonable that an athlete may favor teams or players for different reasons from non-athletes, and that such factors as geographic loyalty may play less of a role because other factors, such as admiration of a certain technique or style of play may be present. Moreover, it seems likely that this particular difference between athletes and the rest of the population would be least

pronounced in childhood, where on the one hand, more children than adults harbor dreams of becoming a professional athlete, and on the other hand, child athletes are less likely than adults to be fully conscious of the multitude of factors that make a great athlete or a great team.

DIFFERENCES AMONG TEAMS

We have examined how aspects of the sports culture vary between men and women, and between athletes and non-athletes. Another interesting set of differences is among the teams themselves. Examining these differences allows us to see how different cultures develop in the context of different sports.

The existing level of knowledge intrigued us the most in this instance. How deeply do members of the different teams engage with the broader sports culture, and how much do they appreciate sports history?

Sport	Mean score	95% confidence interval	Number of respondents
Baseball	14.1	11.7—16.4	30
Men's basketball	8.8	5.7—11.9	16
Women's basketball	2.3	0.7—3.8	10
Men's c.country / track	10.8	7.9—13.6	40
Women's c.country/track	1.7	1.2—2.4	50
Field hockey	3.3	1.6—5.0	23
Men's golf	16.0	7.4—24.6	8
Women's golf	2.0	0.4—3.6	11
Men's gymnastics	2.9	1.1—4.6	12
Women's gymnastics	2.3	0.5—4.0	24
Ice hockey	9.6	6.9—12.3	41
Women's rowing / crew	1.6	0.9—2.3	28
Men's soccer	8.1	5.2—11.1	19
Women's soccer	1.4	0.5—2.4	19
Softball	5.6	2.6—8.7	19
Men's swim / dive	8.4	4.7—12.3	18
Women's swim /dive	1.5	0—7.9	2
Men's tennis	12.0	6.9—17.1	10
Women's tennis	2.1	0.9—3.5	8
Volleyball	1.6	0.6—2.6	13
Water polo	1.1	0.2—2.1	17
Wrestling	4.3	2.3—6.4	21
Non-athletes	6.4	5.6—7.1	411

Thus the highest mean score goes to men's golf, although the massive confidence interval around

that score suggests that we need to be cautious about making large inferences about golfers from a sample of just eight. Baseball is second in this sample, followed by men’s tennis, men’s cross country / track, ice hockey, men’s basketball, men’s swim / dive and men’s soccer. At the level of 95% confidence, there is no significant difference between any of these sports. It appears that the main difference is, predictably, gender-based. There is no significant difference in knowledge between any of the women’s teams. We can, however, obtain a greater separating effect between the men’s teams by limiting this knowledge to the previously mentioned knowledge of historic line-ups:

Historic knowledge			
Team	Mean	95% confidence interval	Number of respondents
Baseball	4.7	3.6—5.9	30
Men’s basketball	1.9	0.8—3.0	16
Men’s Cross-country / track	3.7	2.4—4.9	40
Men’s golf	3.6	0.4—6.8	8
Ice Hockey	3.4	2.3—4.5	24
Men’s soccer	2.1	0.8—3.3	23
Men’s swim / dive	2.3	1.1—3.6	18

The baseball players now have a statistically significant lead over their counterparts in basketball, soccer and swim / dive. It is probably fair to assume that baseball players are the most history-conscious, though we cannot definitively say so from this sample.

CONCLUSION

We are fully aware that any large-scale generalizations emanating from a survey of this kind would be flawed. The instrument itself covered too spotty a ground to allow us to make conclusive comments about American sports culture at the beginning of the 21st century. Moreover, no matter how uncharacteristically—and welcomingly—high the response rate to our survey turned out to be, the fact that it remained restricted to one university considerably limits any generalizations that we can draw from this study. Still, some patterns are well worth noting:

There seems to be little difference as to how members of each team construct their sports culture other than that each team values its own sport as a form of culture that does not pertain to members of other teams—or the non-athletes. In terms of the student-athletes' fluency in the general American sports culture, there seem to be no significant differences among the varsity teams representing the University of Michigan.

Differences between athletes and non-athletes are also surprisingly slender though we noted some fascinating ones such as the preference on the part of athletes for highlight reels on sports shows. We noticed the influence of geography for all our participants—student athletes and non-athletes alike—in terms of their marked preferences for teams and other forms of affective relationships to sports.

Lastly, on the gender dimension, the mere fact that we had more female respondents—both in the athlete and the non-athlete categories—bespeaks a fundamentally altered student topography in the world of American post-secondary education over the past three decades. Title IX really mattered immensely. Furthermore, even though women have come to participate in the world of sports on nearly equal footing with men, it is quite evident that they participate differently. They clearly are equally active producers of sports to men, but very different

consumers. Women identify with Michigan sports—and Michigan football—just as enthusiastically as men, but this identification has a very different meaning to them when we look at it in the larger context of football in America. Our study shows how gendered the discourse of sports continues to remain. If in former times, its gendered nature was primarily evident by women's absence from it, it now manifests itself by women experiencing sports as activity and culture in their own voice, so to speak. How much, if at all or ever, that might change the fundamental structure of sports culture in the United States, remains to be seen. The University of Michigan, though a fine microcosm of this vast and varied land, remains a massively limited one.

Attitudes on Sport among Student Athletes at the University of Michigan

Investigators: Professor Andrei S. Markovits and Eric Ambinder '05

The object of this study is to ascertain for the first time how varsity athletes at the University of Michigan relate to sports. In particular, we are interested in the relationship between sport as a form of participation and its effect on every day life.

-Under **no** circumstances are you to reveal your name or identity in any form. We **require** total anonymity and confidentiality.

-We have taken extensive precautions to guarantee every respondent's complete privacy. Because we are interested only in statistical averages and relationships, your individual responses will be held **strictly confidential**. There will be no identification of responses to particular individuals. We thus hope that you will complete the questionnaire in full. However, if you consider some question too personal, we encourage you to skip just that question rather than fail to return the questionnaire at all.

-This survey is for research purposes only.

-This is **not** a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

-Please read each question carefully and answer it as accurately as possible.

-Your participation is crucial for this study.

-We are really grateful to you for giving us your time and effort to make this study possible. We realize your time is valuable and once again we want to thank you for your contribution to this research project. **PLEASE PLACE THE COMPLETED SURVEY INTO THE PROVIDED ENVELOPE AND SEAL IT FOR PROTECTION OF YOUR PRIVACY!**

-The completion of the survey should take approximately twenty minutes.

-However, we would like to remind you that participating in this survey is COMPLETELY voluntary! Under no circumstances should you feel compelled to complete the questionnaire!

-PLEASE TAKE NOTE: IF YOU ARE UNDER 18, DO NOT FILL OUT THIS SURVEY!

Should you have questions regarding your participation in research, please contact the Human Subjects Protection Office, Kate Keever, 1040 Fleming Building, 503 Thompson Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48109, 734-936-0933, email: irbhsbs@umich.edu concerning file number 72326.

Andrei Markovits, Professor

Eric Ambinder, Class of 2005

PLEASE USE ONLY A BLACK PEN IN COMPLETING THE SQUARES IN FULL. THANK YOU!

1.) What year in school are you?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Fifth-year senior

2.) What is your primary race/ethnicity? (Choose which best describes you)

- Caucasian/White
- African American/Black
- Spanish American/Latino
- Asian American/Pacific Islander
- Native American/Indian
- Other (Please explain): _____

3.) What is your gender?

4.) Are you a resident of Michigan?

- Yes
- No

5.) What region of the country did you live in during most of your childhood?

- Southeast
- Northeast
- Midwest
- Northwest
- Southwest

6.) In what region is your hometown?

- Southeast
- Northeast
- Midwest
- Northwest
- Southwest

7.) What is the population of your current hometown?

- Under 20,000
- Between 20,000 and 100,000
- Between 100,000 and 500,000
- Between 500,000 and 1,000,000
- Over 1,000,000

8.) Are you a citizen of the United States?

- Yes
- No

9.) (If yes) what type of citizen are you?

- Native-born
- Naturalized

10.) Are your parents natural born citizens of the United States?

- Yes, both parents.
- Only one parent.
- No, both parents are not

11.) What is the approximate combined household income of your parents?

_____ dollars

12.) How many older brothers do you have?

_____ brothers

13.) How many older sisters do you have?

_____ sisters

14.) Have any of your siblings ever engaged in any organized competitive sports?

- ↓← Yes
- ↓ No (skip to 16)
- ↓

15.) At what level(s) have your siblings played sports? Check all that apply:

Brothers: Recreational High School College Professional

Sisters: Recreational High School College Professional

16.) What is your marital status?

- Single
- Married
- Divorced
- Widowed

17.) What is your religion? _____

18.) Do you currently have sufficient access to a car to drive to sporting events in the greater Detroit metropolitan area or beyond?

- Yes
- No

19.) When your sport is in season:

How many hours during the week do you devote to athletics?

_____ hours

How many hours during the week do you devote to academics?

_____ hours

20.) When your sport is not in season:
How many hours during the week do you devote to athletics?

_____ hours

How many hours during the week do you devote to academics?

_____ hours

21.) Was the University of Michigan your first choice for college?

Yes

No

22.) On a scale of 1-7, how much influence did the history of Michigan's athletic reputation have on your attending? (Please circle your answer)

None						Great Deal
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

23.) On a scale of 1-7, which of the following best describes your political viewpoint?

Very Liberal						Very Conservative
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

24.) On a scale of 1-7, how would you describe your views regarding homosexuality?

Very Approving						Very Disapproving
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

25.) What is your most favorite sports team (excluding the University of Michigan)?

Note: If you do not have a favorite team please do not answer by listing just any team.

26.) Who is your most favorite current player (excluding the University of Michigan)?

Note: If you do not have a favorite player please do not answer by listing just any person.

27.) Who was your single most favorite player through childhood?

Note: If you did not have a favorite player please do not answer by listing just any person.

28.) In which varsity sport(s) do you participate?

In which club and/or intramural sports(s) if any, do you participate?

29.) On average, how many hours per week do you spend engaging in athletic endeavors (practicing, playing, watching on television, listening to radio, or attending sporting events)?

Practicing _____

Playing _____

Listening to radio _____

Watching on television _____

Attending _____

30.) a.) What is your favorite sport to play? _____

b.) What is your favorite sport to attend? _____

c.) What is your favorite sport to watch on television? _____

31.) Do you currently reside in a city or state that has a professional sports team?

(Please note: We mean professional in the major league sense of the word. i.e. NBA, WNBA, MLB, NFL, MLS, etc.)

Yes

No

32.) Did you play varsity sports at the high school level?

Yes, (please answer question 33)

No, (please skip to 34.)

33.) How many varsity sports did you play in high school (Please list)?

34.) Do you expect to play sports for recreational purposes (i.e. exercise, social events with friends, etc) after departing from college?

- Yes
- No

If yes, please list _____

35.) Do you plan on playing professional sports after your tenure at college?

- Yes
- No

36.) Did your father regularly engage in athletics?

- Yes (please *answer* question 37)
- No (please *skip* to question 38)

37.) At what level did your father play sports?

Father: Recreational Level High School Level Collegiate Level Professional Level

38.) Did your mother regularly engage in athletics?

- Yes (please *answer* question 39)
- No (please *skip* to question 40)

39.) At what level did your mother play sports?

Mother: Recreational Level High School Level College Level Professional Level

40.) On average, how many hours per week do you engage in conversations dealing with sports?

_____ hours

41.) With whom do you most often engage in athletically orientated activities? *Note:* this includes all activities related to athletics without the actual playing and practicing of sport.

- Females
- Males
- Both females and males
- I do not engage in athletically orientated activities

42.) What percentage of your conversations about sports are with females?

_____ %

43.) What percentage of your conversations about sports are with males?

_____ %

44.) What percentage of your conversations has to do with your primary varsity sport?

_____ %

45.) What percentage of your conversations has to do with your primary varsity sport but played elsewhere (at other universities or the professional level)?

_____ %

46.) What percentage of your conversations has to do with sports other than your primary varsity sport?

_____ %

47.) Which organized level of sports do you most commonly discuss with others?

High school level

Collegiate level

Professional level

Other (minor league sports, intramural sports, recreational sports, etc).

48.) What percentage of your conversations are about:

male athletics _____ %

female athletics _____ %

49.) What percentage of your conversations about sports takes place during your practices or competitive games?

_____ %

50.) On average, how many minutes per day do you engage in conversation about sports?
(Think within the past week)

_____ minutes

51.) What percentage of your conversations about sports are discussed with:

siblings _____%

parents _____%

friends _____%

co-workers _____%

significant other _____%

52.) How many hours per week approximately do you watch sports on television with others?

_____ hours

53.) These “others” are:

Males

Females

Both

54.) How many hours per week approximately do you watch sports on television alone?

_____ hours

55.) How many hours per week approximately do you listen to sports radio (either alone or with others)?

_____ hours

56.) To what degree are the following five categories your sources for sports? (Can add up to more than 100%)

Watching television _____%

Listening to the radio _____%

Reading newspapers or magazines _____%

Internet _____%

Friends, family, etc. _____%

57.) Of the following, which is your favorite (not necessarily most watched) sports show on television?

- ESPN *Sportscenter*
- Monday Night Football*
- Pardon the Interruption*
- 2 Minute Drill*
- Best Damn Sports Show Period*

58.) Of the following types of shows about sports, which genre do you prefer the *most*?

- A 30 to 60 minute show highlighting the day's sporting events with some extra commentary and journalistic stories about athletes.
- An actual sporting event. (an NBA, U of M, NFL, MLB game, etc.)
- An opinion-based show with two adversaries debating each other on current issues headlining sports.
- A trivia-based game show pitting contestants knowledgeable about sports against each other for cash prizes.
- A more comedic approach to sports with jokes, mocking of participants, and interviews.

59.) Do you receive any sport magazines via mail by subscription on a regular basis? (i.e. *Sporting News*, *Sports Illustrated*, *ESPN Magazine*, etc.)

- Yes
- No

60.) If yes, how many do you subscribe to?

61.) Do you collect sporting memorabilia of any type? (sports cards, books, posters, plaques, autographs, banners, pennants, etc). If so, please list them below.

62.) Do you own any clothing with a logo of a professional sports team?

- Yes
- No

63.) Do you own any clothing with a logo of a collegiate sports team?

- Yes
- No

64.) On a regular basis, how often will you wear this clothing?

- Never
- At practice and playing
- As a spectator at sporting events in a venue
- As a spectator watching games on television.
- As ordinary casual clothing

65.) In what sports (if any) has your family purchased season tickets? (University of Michigan sports do **not** apply)?

66.) In what fantasy sports (if any) have you participated?

67.) Within the past year, how many sporting events did you attend other than the ones in which you participate as a player?

_____ recreational sporting events

_____ high school sporting events

_____ collegiate sporting events

_____ professional sporting events

68.) What is your *main* reason for attending sporting events?

- Love the sport
- Like watching the players
- The atmosphere
- Studying others' techniques to improve your own abilities
- Other _____

75.) Without consulting ANY sources (such as books, encyclopedias, Internet, almanacs, friends, television, etc.) – remember, this is NOT a test and we are not judging you – could you list three or more players of the following professional teams?

A) The New York Yankees of the 1950s _____

B) The Boston Celtics of the 1960s _____

C) The Pittsburgh Steelers of the 1970s _____

D) The Detroit Red Wings of the 1950s _____

E) The current New York Yankees _____

F) The current Boston Celtics _____

G) The current Pittsburgh Steelers _____

H) The current Detroit Red Wings _____
